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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 001561

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SUBJECT: GERMANY: OEF AND UNIFIL MANDATES EXTENDED, BUT  
PROBABLY FOR THE LAST TIME

REF: A. BERLIN 1402

[1](#)B. BERLIN 1480

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR GEORGE GLASS. REASONS: 1.4  
(B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. The Bundestag on December 3 approved the extension of the mandates for Bundeswehr participation in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the Maritime Task Force (MTF) of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). While the OEF mandate was extended for a full year, as per usual practice, FM Westerwelle's Free Democratic Party (FDP) succeeded in getting Chancellor Merkel's Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union (CDU-CSU) to agree to a review after six months. If the FDP has its way, the review will lead to a decision to terminate the mandate at that point. The UNIFIL mandate was extended for only six months, so it will expire right around the time of the OEF review. Again, if the FDP has its way, the mandate will not be extended again. The FDP plan is for the maritime assets now in OEF and UNIFIL to be transferred to the EU Atalanta counterpiracy mission. END SUMMARY.

OEF

[1](#)2. (C) As expected (ref A), the opposition Social Democrats (SPD) turned against the OEF mandate and voted overwhelmingly against its renewal, joining the Greens and the Left Party in opposing it. While CDU-CSU/FDP parliamentarians supported the one-year extension with only two defections, thereby ensuring a comfortable margin of victory (322 to 266), it was far from the super majority that German governments usually want for overseas deployments. The decline in support continues a trend since the mandate was first passed in 2001.

In opposing renewal of the mandate, opposition parliamentarians argued it was no longer justifiable to conduct counterterrorism operations on the basis of the self-defense provisions of Article 51 of the UN Charter. The new OEF mandate is essentially a roll-over of the previous one, with a slight reduction in the troop ceiling from 800 to [1](#)700. Currently, one German frigate and some 260 military personnel are deployed under the mandate, which limits Bundeswehr involvement in OEF to maritime operations off the Horn of Africa.

[1](#)3. (C) FDP Foreign Policy Spokesman Rainer Stinner told us that while the FDP had been a consistent support of the OEF mandate in previous years, the situation had changed and it was no longer "honest" to deploy German forces on the basis of "self defense" from the 9/11 attacks. Therefore, he noted, the FDP had supported one more extension, along with a review after six months, at which time, it would seek to terminate the mandate. He noted that the CDU-CSU is resisting the potential termination, claiming that this would

send a bad signal to the U.S. about the lack of German solidarity in the war on terrorism. Stinner was not convinced that the U.S. really put that much stock in German participation in OEF, especially since that participation was currently limited to just maritime operations off the Horn of Africa.

UNIFIL

14. (C) The vote on the UNIFIL extension was overwhelmingly in favor, 429 to 82, with 10 abstentions. Most of those opposed came from the 70 Left Party parliamentarians, who voted in block against it. Large majorities of both the SPD and Greens supported mandate renewal. However, at the government's request, the mandate was only extended for six months, until June 30, 2010. The new UNIFIL mandate is essentially a roll-over of the previous one, with a reduction in the troop ceiling from 1200 to 800. The German contribution to the mission is currently 260 personnel and three ships.

15. (C) As reported ref B, the FDP has long opposed the UNIFIL mandate out of concern about German soldiers coming into conflict with Israelis and the effect on Germany's role as an honest broker in the Middle East. The FDP views this six-month extension as nothing more than a transition period to enable the German Navy to make a graceful withdrawal. Stinner told us that he had personally rejected the previous FDP concerns about UNIFIL, but that he too now favored ending the mandate. He claimed that the original mission of stopping the smuggling of weapons to Hezbollah was not

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applicable anymore since Hezbollah was now part of the Lebanese government.

COMMENT

16. (C) While the CDU-CSU could still push back against FDP attempts to end both mandates by the summer of 2010, the fact is that the Union has already consented to this course of action in the coalition agreement. The language on UNIFIL is especially unambiguous: "In the framework of the UN, we will work towards reducing and ultimately ending Germany's contribution to UNIFIL's Maritime Task Force." On OEF, the language is somewhat subtler, but also clear: "In connection with counterterrorism and counterpiracy at the Horn of Africa, we will continue to strive for better coordination of deployments and carry out a critical review of the multitude of mandates with a view toward reducing them."

17. (C) There is a growing consensus here that it makes more sense for Germany to concentrate its limited naval resources on the EU Atalanta counterpiracy mission rather than spreading them out among three different operations. As noted ref A, unless we are prepared to make the case to the CDU-CSU that continued German participation in OEF is indispensable to us, it seems likely that it will go along reluctantly with FDP demands to end the mandate -- if not after the six-month review, then after it expires in December 2010. The fact that the SPD has now swung against the OEF mandate will make it very difficult for the CDU-CSU to insist on another renewal.

MURPHY